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and extend the agitation, and the proposed exposition to commemorate the discovery of Columbus will be a great international educator.

The October conference is simply a deliberative body. Its functions are confined to discussions and recommendations, and its results will require legislation and diplomacy to become permanently effective. Upon our Congress rests the great responsibility. Our merchants must have the same facilities that their foreign competitors enjoy to meet them upon an equal footing. It cannot be expected that the people of Latin America will furnish us opportunities that are furnished them by European capital and enterprise. They have already sufficient lines of communication with markets upon the other side of the Atlantic, where their wants are now supplied. They lack nothing in the way of commercial advantages. They have profitable markets for their products, and adequate means of reaching them, which have been established by their customers. They are not seeking our trade, but we are seeking theirs, and to secure it we must employ the same methods that other nations have used.

WILLIAM ELEROY CURTIS.

II.

WHAT MAKES THE ACTOR?

THIS apparently simple question has been put by the writer to many eminent actors and actresses without in any instance eliciting a satisfactory answer. In some cases a more explicit question has been asked, but even when put in this extended form, "What are the qualities of mind and temperament that make the actor?" the replies have been indefinite. Many people whose names are in the front rank of the dramatic profession have clearly stated their inability to give any answer at all. It seems singular that the followers of an art should be unable to point out the necessary foundations for success in their calling, or to explain on what grounds their own popularity rests. Refuge has been taken in the remark that the actor, like the poet, "is born, not made"; but this is an evasion, not a solution. However much the poet may owe to his birth, the intellectual and temperamental gifts that go to the making of poetry are capable of reasonably clear definition. Where the actor differs from the followers of any of the other arts is in the fact that his personal appearance and manner enter largely into his work, and to a considerable extent determine its acceptability. His figure, face, and voice constitute the instrument on which he plays, but, no matter how attractive this may be, the player must possess, in order to be great, the informing ability to draw out the necessary harmonies and make all humanity vibrate in sympathy with them.

Mr. Boucicault, who has probably given as much thought as any living man to all that concerns the stage, said: "The actor's art is purely mimetic. I remember a famous old actor saying to me when looking at a performance: 'Monkeys, my boy; we are all monkeys!' Intellect has not necessarily much to do with acting. I don't think I ever met a man of more moderate intellectual development than the elder Farren, who was famous in *Sir Peter Teazle*, *Grandfather Whitehead*, etc., etc. Well, when I was going to produce 'London Assurance,' he didn't think there was much in the character of *Sir Harcourt Courtney*. I took him for a walk in Hyde Park and showed him two old beaux. 'Now,' I said, 'I have built *Sir Harcourt* out of materials in those two men. Study them; get them down fine.' He did, and the result was a performance that ranked with the best. Left to himself, Farren would not have evolved anything effective. His talent was entirely mimetic."

But when Mr. Boucicault was asked, "How about the expression of emotions which lie outside the limits of the actor's observations or experiences?" his answer was: "The actor then draws upon his imagination, and mimics or reproduces what he believes to be true." This is an extension of the field of mimicry which might be made to cover a vast amount of ground in many arts. It seems to be purely arbitrary, and not entirely logical. When one of Mr. Boucicault's ability is forced into such apparent paradoxes to explain or defend his theory, it only serves to show the extreme difficulty of forming any theory whatever.

Lawrence Barrett's answer was terse, consisting of these three words: "Sensibility and imagination." Undoubtedly these are requisites, but by no means all that is needed. Sensibility is an admirable quality in an actor, if properly held in check; but too much sensibility will mar the effect of a performance. The actor who yields unreservedly to his own tears or emotions becomes indistinct and inartistic. There are hundreds of people who fancy they would make good actors because their feelings are easily roused. Many young actors and actresses really suffer with the characters they represent, but this does not necessarily make their work appear true to audiences. There is a vast difference between suffering one's self and causing an audience to believe one is suffering. One is nature; the other art; and nature is not usually effective upon the stage. What the French call "the optic of the theatre" makes nature appear distorted and out of perspective and true coloring. For this reason a real tree upon the stage would be to all appearances less real than a painted one. Nature's greens are not vivid before the footlights, but the artist so heightens them that in relation to other things they are made to look brilliant, but yet natural. So it is with acting; the appearance, not the reality, is wanted. Even when the spectator most loses thought of his surroundings in seeing a play, he is still conscious that it is all acting. If he did not have this consciousness, he could not, unless he were an inhuman brute, find pleasure in witnessing the depiction of suffering. And this consciousness of unreality, so necessary to the spectator, is of still greater importance to the actor. In Mr. Archer's recently-published book, "Masks and Faces," the author has been at pains to gather the statements of famous actors as to how much they feel with their characters. The great bulk of the testimony shows that, when emotion is unreservedly yielded to, the performance is ineffective.

A large class of actors and writers about the stage claim that good acting is simply the result of thought and skilful technique. We have lately had in New York one or more distinguished actors of this school, but much as their talents have been admired, the one touch of true feeling that makes the efforts of less finished artists reach the heart has been felt to be wanting. Acting that emanates from the brain only will never rouse the majority of theatre-goers. A highly-cultivated intellect is by no means necessary to theatrical success. Any one who has a large acquaintance with actors will confirm the truth of this statement. Indeed, it is questionable if high intellect and much culture do not as a rule destroy that mobility and plasticity of temperament and bearing which are a part of the tools of a great actor.

"Magnetism" is a word which has of late come into general use to describe the qualities of sympathetic actors. Its employment does not, however, define anything. The grouping of powers under this head makes their origin no more easy to understand than is that of the mysterious force whose name has been given to them. Beauty of face, figure, and voice do not make up magnetism. Several of the most beautiful women on the stage are utter "sticks." Many who are plain to an almost painful degree can play at will on the feelings of their audiences.

An eminent teacher of elocution said: "Acting is the proper conveying of the thoughts of the author. This must be done by speaking his words correctly. Elocution is everything in acting." Such a dogma is contrary to the opinions and experiences of nearly all actors, who believe that what is *done* upon the stage is far more important than what is *said*. Any one who saw "Jim the Penman" will remember that in the crucial moment of the play, when *Mrs. Ralston* discovered that her husband was a forger, not a word was said. Yet, for about two minutes, *Mrs. Booth* held the spectators breathless by her silent acting. It is possible, perhaps even probable, that in poetic plays and certain tragedies the words may be more important than the action; but this is assuredly not true of the great majority of dramatic representations. *Mme. Modjeska*, in an interview printed last year, pointed out very clearly the difference between the poetic and the emotional play. She said, in effect, that the poetic play depended upon thought and diction, while the emotional play depended upon action; and she stated that, though she ventured to act *Camille*, this was her only attempt at emotional drama, and that she considered herself purely a poetic actress.

The writer is not rash enough to attempt to define the constituent properties of an art when its own most distinguished followers confess their inability to do so. Possibly, however, this statement of difficulties and diverse opinions may incite thought, and induce some one to grasp and explain the elusive qualities and gifts necessary to the success of the actor.

JULIAN MAGNUS.

III.

IF!

A NEWSPAPER writer, speaking of the late Thomas J. Potter, who, as general manager of the Union Pacific Railway, received an annual salary of \$40,000, says that he began his career twenty-five years ago as a lineman on an Iowa railway at \$45 per month. "He worked his way up," it is added, from the latter position to the former, "and there is not a young man on any railroad in the United States for whom the same result is not possible, if he should put into his work the same amount of brains and zeal which Mr. Potter did." How inspiring! What a trumpet-call to young railway employees to become, one and all, presidents of great lines, and the recipients of yearly salaries each one of which is in itself a fortune! "*If*" he should put into his work," etc. No doubt; and "*if*" my aunt had been a man, she would have been my uncle." It is just and only that provoking "*if*," reader, that prevents a beggar from becoming a Rothschild, or you and me from rivalling Webster at the bar, Gladstone in the senate, or Scott and Dickens in fiction. "*If*" is a very small word,—a monosyllable of two letters only,—yet how immense is that "*If*"! Thousands of persons who now languish in obscurity would astonish the world, were they not, like Mirabeau in his youth, confined in the castle of If.

"If I but had an opening," sighs many a young man in these days of overcrowded professions and multiplying competitors for office and place, "the world should see what I can do." "If I but had an opening!"—as if the very seal and sign of ability—the essential difference between it, or genius, and dilettantism—were not a regal superiority to the "openings" and "opportunities" which so many aspirants to wealth or honor make a condition of success. The successful man is the one who *made* a way when he could not find one; who made the adverse circumstances, over which others were moaning, the ministers and aids to his advancement, instead of becoming their slave. The difficulties which disheartened them only stiffened his sinews; the block of granite which was an obstacle in their pathway became a stepping-stone in his. A lad of twelve years of age, who already played the piano very skilfully, once said to Mozart: "Herr Kapellmeister, I should very much like to compose something. How am I to begin?" "Pho, pho," said Mozart, "you must wait." "But you," said the boy, "composed much earlier." "Yes," replied Mozart, "but *I asked nothing about it*. If one has the spirit of a composer, *one writes because he cannot help it*." On another occasion, writing in reply to a friend who had asked about his way of composing music, he names certain occasions when his ideas flow best and most abundantly, and adds: "*Whence and how they come I know not, nor can I force them*. . . . Why productions take from my hand that particular form and style which makes them *Mozartish*, and different from the works of other composers, is probably owing to the same cause which renders my nose so and so, large or aquiline, or, in short, makes it Mozart's and different from those of other people, for I really *do not study to aim at any originality*."

The letters of Dickens show that it was in a similar way that he wrote those wondrous novels of his that enchant the world. When a new creation was about to rise from the ocean-depths of thought, he did not go about asking advice, or gird up his literary energies by a prodigious effort of the will, but, to use his own language about "The Chimes," "all his affections and passions got twined and knotted upon it"; he went wandering about at night into the strangest places, "possessed," spirit-driven, a prophet commissioned to utter the life-giving word to men's souls, and finding no rest until he uttered it. So, though rarely perhaps in the same degree, with the eminent men, the great leaders, in almost every calling; they chose